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Sylvester contributed 35 years of service to the nation in various roles, including deputy director of acquisition resources and analysis for acquisition management, deputy director for property and plant equipment, assistant deputy under secretary of Defense for acquisition reform, and deputy director for acquisition workforce and career management—all as a member of the Senior Executive Service in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. He began his career with the U.S. Army and spent a year as a legislative fellow on the staff of Sen. Carl Levin. At the time of his passing, he was vice president for acquisition policy at the Aerospace Industries Association.

A mentor to many and friend to many more, Sylvester forged many strong friendships at DAU and at many other institutions. To honor him, Defense AT&L reached out to a few of Sylvester's colleagues, who shared their fond memories of this leader and his contributions to the acquisition profession.

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President and CEO, Professional
Services Council
Former Deputy Under Secretary of
Defense (Acquisition Reform)

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A portrait of a middle-aged man with short brown hair and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a dark tie with a small white pattern. An American flag is visible in the background to the left.

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get things done, and done well. He will be missed. And he will not—ever—be forgotten.”

Former DoD Procurement Analyst, DHS Contracting
Career Manager

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'70s, just getting my feet wet in the acquisition business. I was working on armored and automotive systems in combat developments at the Armor Center at Fort Knox. I was on the team working the requirements for the new Army tank—which became the Abrams. I wrote the first operational test for the Abrams and had to obtain approval for the test through all of the major Army commands, to include the Tank Automotive Command (TACOM) at Warren, Mich., and all the way up to the G-3 (then ODCSOPS) in the Pentagon. Ric was at TACOM back then—my guess is he was a GS-12 or 13—and worked with me on Abrams as well as other tank and automotive issues. He was always very helpful and really knew his business. I respected him very much. And yes, being so close to Ann Arbor, you can bet he wore his university's gold and Navy blue very proudly!"

Wayne Glass

DAU Program Director, Strategic Partnerships



"Rick was the ultimate professional, who cared deeply and worked every day to make a difference. He was both tough and compassionate. He worked hard, had a great sense of humor, and was always thoughtful. Even when you disagreed with Rick, you always respected him. He was a great leader, a great friend, and will be deeply missed."

Frank J. Anderson, Jr.

*President, Strategic Public Sector Solutions, LLC
DAU President, 2000-2010*



"It was an honor to have Ric work for me, and he was very good in both the acquisition management and the plant, property, and equipment jobs he did for ARA. He is, and will be, terribly missed."

Nancy Spruill

*Director of Acquisition Resources and Analysis,
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition,
Technology and Logistics*



"Ric was my deputy and teammate for over nine years in OSD and my dear friend for almost 18 years. From the first day I met Ric, I was impressed by his honesty and his straightforwardness. But very soon I also admired him for work ethic, determination, teamwork, loyalty, intelligence, capability, and his 'can do' attitude. There was nothing Ric couldn't or wouldn't take on in acquisition reform and acquisition initiatives. He loved his work, and he loved working hard to make a difference for all those he served—particularly our military men and women: our warfighters and all those that support them through acquisition, technology, and logistics support.

"He was a true patriot and warrior himself, trying to make things better in the DoD and proudly served our nation for his

entire adult life—as a young man working for the Army in Germany, then in OSD, and [later] as a defense contractor. Ric was talented and knowledgeable and shared his talent, knowledge and experience with all those he worked for or by mentoring program managers as well as those that worked for him.

"Ric taught us so much. He taught us to work hard, but make it fun, and play hard. He always made time for his loved ones, Mary, Christy, Kim, Dave, and his grandchildren that he loved dearly. He also taught us what real courage is as he took on his battle to beat cancer. He helped so many of us by sharing his feelings and challenges as he made his final journey, trying to make it easier on us all. We could not make things better for him except to let him know that we were thinking of him with positive thoughts, sending caring thoughts, prayers and our love. Ric fought his battle with courage, determination, grace, and humility. He did all he could to get well, but he also taught us through his faith how to accept what we must. The world is better because of Ric, and I am grateful for having known him. I will miss my dear friend very much."

Donna Richbourg

*Former Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Acquisition Reform)*



"Ric recognized the value of the acquisition workforce, and he worked to enable them to be more effective and to have successful careers. He was president of DAU in an interim capacity during 2000, as he often proudly reminded his colleagues. Many faculty and staff remember that time as a turning point between the DAU of the 1990s and what it was to become in the next decade. Ric was an early and persuasive advocate for expanding DAU's products beyond the classroom to helping the workforce perform on the job. Examples include continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and 'Ask-a-Professor,' which have grown into mainstays of the university's offerings. We remember him as a dedicated public servant, a powerful intellect, a caring person, and a friend."

Jim McMichael

Vice President, Defense Acquisition University



"Ric Sylvester, with strong character and determination, made monumental contributions to the defense acquisition community. He effectively mentored his teams with a sense of purposeful accomplishment and maintained a collegial environment, rich with pride and enjoyment. We will always cherish our many discussions regarding acquisition reform and initiatives for excellence. Enduring is his message of importance, 'I am blessed with a loving family and good friends, who could ask for more.'"

Paul T. McMahon

*Deputy Director for Administration, Executive Secretariat
OSD (AT&L)*